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AUTHOR Kanter, Martha; McIntyre, Chuck
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ABSTRACT

In 1985, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (BGCCC) and the Western Association Accrediting Commission (WAAC) authorized a process by which colleges are to evaluate their performance with respect to statewide priorities as they conduct accreditation self-studies. The self-evaluation is intended to assist the Chancellor's Office in determining how well the colleges as a system are performing with respect to certain broad priorities such as transfer education, vocational education, remediation, and access. Colleges undertaking accrediting self-studies during 1985-86 were the first to perform this evaluation, with 10 of 11 colleges able to complete the required reports. Among the issues identified or corroborated were recent decreases in student access; lack of information on vocational education; a continuing need to review certain aspects of transfer education despite generally good performance; wide variation in the policies and practices for evaluating programs and services; the need for more objective measures of student services; and apparently inadequate support to meet the increasing demand for remedial and basic skills education. This report on the statewide priorities study includes recommendations for further work, a memorandum of understanding between the BGCCC and WAAC, a list of statewide priorities, an enumeration of the analytical steps used in evaluating statewide priorities, and a comparison of the content of accrediting standards and statewide priorities. (EJV)

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Evaluating Statewide Priorities

by

Martha Kanter
and
Chuck McIntyre

Discussed as Agenda Item 5
at a Meeting of the Board of Governors
of the California Community Colleges
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Board of Governors of the
California Community Colleges
January 21-22, 1988

EVALUATING STATEWIDE PRIORITIES

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For Information

Background

The Board of Governors and Western Association Accrediting Commission adopted a Memorandum of Understanding in 1985 (see Appendix A) authorizing a process by which colleges are to evaluate their performance with respect to statewide priorities (see Appendix B) as they conduct their accreditation self-study.

Accreditation is a voluntary private process in which, once every five years, a college conducts a self-study of how well it is accomplishing its (institutional) objectives or priorities using accrediting standards as the criteria for performance. This self-study is reviewed and validated by an outside team of peers. This team then makes a recommendation to the Accrediting Commission which determines the college's accreditation status. Besides determining accreditation status, this work is designed to help a college plan and implement improvements.

The evaluation of statewide priorities is a supplemental study to be done in conjunction with accreditation. The purpose of this study is to provide information which will assist the Chancellor's Office in determining how well the colleges (as a system) are performing with respect to certain broad priorities such as transfer education, vocational education, remediation, access, and others. Guidelines for the evaluation of statewide priorities were developed in a project supported by the U.S. Department of Education Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) (see Appendix C). The statewide priorities were derived from the Board of Governors statement on Community College Mission, adopted December 1983.

Colleges undertaking accrediting self-studies during 1985-86 (with visits scheduled for 1986-87) were the first to perform this work under the Board and Commission memorandum. A second group (conducting self-studies in 1986-87 and being visited in 1987-88) is currently working on this project.

This item summarizes a report that covers work of the first group of colleges and comments in a preliminary way also on work of the second group. A variety of

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information sources form the basis for this report, including the work on the priorities, accreditation self-studies, surveys of accrediting liaison staff at the colleges, accrediting team reports, and interviews with Chancellor's Office staff on accrediting teams.

Analysis

Review of the statewide priorities project shows that the work is feasible and provides a perspective that other evaluation tools do not.

While the work proved difficult, ten of eleven colleges were able to complete the required reports. The focus on outcomes and system performance complements other state and local evaluation work and is consistent with national trends in student assessment and institutional accountability. Moreover, the work on evaluating statewide priorities is the only process in which college staff systematically assess the performance of their college on matters of major statewide interest. Consequently, the work is helpful in formulating statewide policy issues. Among issues of particular note that were identified or corroborated by the work are:

- recent decreases in student access,
- lack of information on vocational education,
- continuing need to review certain aspects of transfer education despite generally good performance,
- wide variation in the policies and practices for evaluating programs and services,
- need for more objective measures of student services, and
- apparently inadequate support to meet the increasing demand for remedial and basic skills education.

Among the evaluation tools, the study of statewide priorities is the only vehicle which makes an explicit attempt to utilize student outcome measures to interpret the performance of colleges on work of statewide interest. In addition, it is the only tool which asks college staff to assess the performance of their college on items of statewide interest.

The annual accountability report required by AB 306 (1987) would examine a function like transfer education at each of the 106 colleges. By contrast, the statewide priorities work is designed to support examination of a function like transfer education for all colleges in the aggregate (i.e., the system), not each college individually.

Aside from greater focus on student outcomes, the priorities report differs from accreditation also in its subject content. (This is illustrated by the chart in Appendix D.) The priorities focus more on broad instructional programs and functions, but don't directly examine the resources of the colleges; e.g., learning (library, media), physical, and financial resources and staff, or the colleges' general management to the same degree as accreditation.

Further Work

Review of the work by colleges on evaluating statewide priorities suggests the need for a number of further steps. These recommended steps should be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission and should undergo the usual consultative process in anticipation of action by both the Commission and the Board of Governors later this year.

The recommended steps are as follows:

(a) The accreditation self-study should incorporate evaluation of statewide, as well as institutional, priorities.

Incorporating both efforts within the self-study should eliminate possible duplication of effort encountered by college staff when the work is done separately. This step should strengthen the content of the self-study as well.

(b) The statewide priorities should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated and reduced in number.

Most colleges found work on ten statewide priorities to be difficult. By focusing on a smaller number of the most important priorities, it is likely that the quality of the analyses can be improved. In addition, the priorities are derived from a document (the Board of Governors' Statement on Community College Mission), adopted in 1983. Some updating to reflect more recent work on community college reform should provide useful.

(c) Community college instructional and support programs should be evaluated systematically (possibly by requiring evaluation of one-fourth of all programs in each of four years with the fifth year devoted to accreditation self-study).

Policies and practices for the evaluation of programs in community colleges are inconsistent, nonexistent in some cases, and unrelated to accreditation in most cases. Any more systematic approach should be

related to the five-year cycle of institutional evaluation that is required by accreditation.

(d) There should be more consistency in the content of the evaluation of programs and services.

The processes and criteria used by community colleges to evaluate their programs vary substantially from college to college. Some colleges attempt to measure outcomes, others do not. Some colleges use peer evaluation, others do not. It would appear that a general procedure and a minimum set of evaluation criteria would enhance interpretation and use of the results of program evaluations.

(e) Work should continue toward the development of (1) an overall evaluation strategy for the Board of Governors and Chancellor's Office and (2) and planning mechanism by which program evaluation is tied to program improvement.

Contributions of the statewide priorities reporting and other available evaluation tools need to be specified and coordinated if the Board is to effectively help community colleges be accountable for their work to the public. Moreover, if these evaluation tools are to be useful, they must support processes in which programs are planned and/or improved. These latter mechanisms are not generally in place.

Staff Presentation: *Martha Kanter*
Assistant Deputy Chancellor for Policy Development

Dr. Chuck McIntyre, Director
Research and Analysis

APPENDIX A

A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND THE ACCREDITNG COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES OF THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Prologue

The California colleges and their governing boards, the California Community College Board of Governors, and the Western Association Accrediting Commission for Community Colleges have unique yet complementary roles in maintaining and promoting the quality and integrity of the colleges. The institutions have the responsibility for self-evaluation, the state board the authority for general oversight of the colleges, and the Accrediting Commission the responsibility for peer-review evaluation. This total process assists the colleges in serving the public interests and continually striving for improvement.

Role of the Commission and of the State Agency

The Accrediting Commission will utilize the standards and processes developed with the help of its member institutions to evaluate individual colleges. The state agency will evaluate how well the colleges in the aggregate are meeting statewide objectives established by the Board of Governors.

Organizational Relationships

The chancellor for Community Colleges will appoint a representative to the Accrediting Commission. In its relationship with the Board of Governors and the Chancellor, the Commission acts as a voluntary, non-governmental educational organization. It does not assume any regulatory responsibilities assigned to the state agency by statute.

College Responsibilities

Each college will prepare a self-study report useing the standards and procedures of the Accrediting Commission. The report will include evaluations of college performance in achieving its own stated purposes. Each college will also prepare a separate report evaluating its performance in achieving statewide objectives. Since the two evaluations are closely interrelated, the data obtained in college evaluation studies will often serve both purposes.

Accreditation Visits

The Commission will constitute peer-review teams for periodic evaluations of each college. A Chancellor-designated staff person will serve on each comprehensive evaluation team. The state representative will receive copies of the self-study report and other materials of the institution to be evaluated, attend training workshops, and participate as a regular team member in the evaluation visit. The colleges, through evaluation fees, will defray the expenses of team members other than the Chancellor's representative. The Chancellor will assume the cost for the staff representative.

Each accreditating team will prepare an evaluation report, using Commission standards and procedures. In addition, a critique on how well the college prepared its report on statewide objectives will be submitted by the team.

Use of Reports

The college self-study and the accrediting team evaluation report will be reviewed by the Commission. The college report on statewide objectives and the team critique will be forwarded to the Chancellor for the California Community Colleges.

Cooperative Projects

The Commission and the Chancellor's Office staff will engage in joint efforts to assist the colleges in improving evaluation and planning in order that the colleges may continually strengthen their effectiveness in serving the people of California.

APPENDIX B

STATEWIDE PRIORITIES

(These priorities are adapted from a Policy Statement on Statewide Community College Mission, adopted by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges in December 1983.)

California community college districts:

- Have a responsibility to provide open admission without regard to race, ethnic or national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or prior educational status or any other unreasonable basis for discrimination.

- Should promote academic standards and student achievement by:

    - appropriate assessment, placement, and follow-up activities.

- Should promote academic standards and student achievement by:

    - program evaluation.

- Will provide transfer programs which are carefully and continuously articulated with collegiate institutions and the high schools.

- Will provide vocational programs to prepare students for entry level employment, occupational advancement, and career change. These programs:

    - are articulated with secondary and advanced programs,
    - confer associate degrees,
    - confer certificates for work leading to early employment,
    - support continuing reentry education, and
    - may involve joint programs with business, industry, labor, and government.

- Will provide liberal arts programs and general education courses:

    - that contribute to associate degree programs and/or
    - are designed to broaden knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to develop analytical ability and critical thinking and to foster interest in life-long learning in the educational, scientific and cultural fields essential for effective participation in a complex society.

- Will provide student services to meet identified needs of student development, such as:

    - assistance in matters of admission, financial aids and job placement,
    - diagnostic testing, evaluation, and monitoring of student progress,
    - academic, career, and personal counseling as related to the student's education,
    - articulation with high schools and collegiate institutions, and
    - student activities.

- Should provide remedial and basic skills education for students needing preparation for community college level courses and programs, including:

    - remedial courses for those with educational deficiencies,
    - developmental courses for those with special learning problems,, and
    - ongoing diagnostic programs.

- Should provide noncredit (continuing and community education) classes, in response to state and local needs under Education Code Section 84711 and local delineation of function agreements including:

    - parenting,
    - basic skills,
    - ESL,
    - citizenship,
    - for substantially handicapped,
    - for older adults,
    - home economics, and
    - health and safety.

- Should respond to unique local needs by providing, through fees or other (nonpublic) local support, the following community services:

    - avocational courses,
    - recreational courses,
    - community and cultural events, and
    - community and civic center functions.

APPENDIX C

ANALYTICAL STEPS FOR USE IN EVALUATING STATEWIDE PRIORITIES

- **Priority**: *Access*

  1. Assess educational needs of its clientele;
  2. Compare college enrollment (ethnicity, sex, age) to the population of the service area;
  3. Make adjustments for other educational suppliers in the area;
  4. Evaluate for changes over time;
  5. Compare enrollment to similar colleges;
  6. Compare enrollment to local needs (and norms);
  7. Identify underrepresented groups; and
  8. Analyze reasons for underrepresentation -- determine whether changes can achieve desired results or would be unproductive.

- **Priority**: *Assessment*

  1. Examine method of evaluating and assessing student level;
  2. Review counseling and adivising procedures;
  3. Analyze strategies for providing learning opportunities for students with special needs; and
  4. Compare the retention of students who have undergone assessment in the college to a prior point-in-time or over a period of time.

- **Priority**: *Program Evaluation*

  1. Assess staffing competency and adequacy in learning resources and facilities;

2. Evaluate program review and the improvement process by quantitative measures: WSCH per faculty, cost per ADA, etc.;

3. Evaluate program review and the improvement process by qualitative measures: general trends, peer assessment, etc.;

4. Compare objectives of the college to the needs and preferences of the area's population;

5. Analyze present and future local and regional labor markets;

6. Make adjustments for other educational suppliers in the area;

7. Assess expected future needs and preferences; and

8. Compare programs with current needs and preferences of the local population by:

   -- student type: disabled, disadvantaged, etc.
   -- student objective: transfer, occupational, etc.
   -- type of programs offered (TOP).

- **Priority**: *Transfer*

1. Analyze (or review) competency of staff;

2. Analyze adequacy of curriculum;

3. Review level of counseling;

4. Assess college efforts at articulation with high schools and senior institutions;

5. Measure progress (intra-term, inter-term, inter-year persistence) of students enrolled in transfer programs;

6. Analyze rate of students transferring to four-year institutions in comparison with other colleges/in comparison with some norm/over time; and

7. Analyze success of students transferring to four-year institutions in comparison with other colleges/in comparison with some norm/over time.

- **Priority**: *Vocational Education*

  1. Evaluate progress and performance of students enrolled in vocational education programs (Measure change over time through competency tests, persistence and GPA);

  2. Evaluate learning resources currently in place;

  3. Assess available equipment and facilities;

  4. Compare educational offerings with needs of individuals in the service area;

  5. Analyze present and future structure of local and regional labor markets;

  6. Make adjustments for other educational suppliers in the area;

  7. Identify perceptions of the programs by students, staff and area employers; and

  8. Conduct a follow-up evaluation of students to measure rate of job placements, advancement, productivity, etc. (VEDS).

- **Priority**: *Liberal Arts and General Education*

  1. Examine breadth of offerings in liberal arts and general education;

  2. Assess whether liberal arts and general education courses offered by the college are transferable to four-year colleges/universities;

  3. Analyze articulation efforts with four-year colleges/universities;

  4. Evaluate philosophy of the college and the criteria used for approving new courses and for continuing established general education programs;

  5. Compare transferring student's attitudes toward the liberal arts and general education classes taken at the college to offerings at four-year colleges/universities;

  6. Analyze extent of program emphasis on improving student analytical ability across the curriculum; and

  7. Compare students, who have taken liberal arts and general education courses to students who have not, inasfar as their involvement in cultural, civic, and educational activities are concerned.

- **Priority**: *Student Services*

  1. Analyze current services offered by the college to the student population by:

     -- student admissions: availability and accessibility of information, ease and accuracy of registration, effective maintenance and retrieval of records, etc.
     -- student type: disabled, disadvantaged, older students, etc.
     -- student objective: transfer, occupational, general education, etc.

  2. Assess adequacy of academic, career, and personal counseling;

  3. Assess financial aid efforts;

     -- to obtain all sources of funding and scholarships,
     -- in the awarding of funds,
     -- in the dissemination of information about programs and services,
     -- in the application process;

  4. Evaluate effectiveness of the job placement program by:

     -- identification of employment opportunities available,
     -- dissemination of employment information,
     -- assistance to students in job search and job retention skills,
     -- services to employers by identifying and referring of qualified applicants,
     -- gathering of information about job performance, and
     -- satisfaction from students and employers;

  5. Analyze adequacy of student affairs by providing information and opportunities for involvement in student government and institutional governance, campus and community activities, etc.

- **Priority**: *Continuing and Community Education*

  1. Assess the specific needs of the community;

  2. Assess the existence of other local suppliers of similar educational services;

  3. Analyze effectiveness of programs through measurement of outcomes such as increased:

- -- political participation,
- -- charitable and civic work,
- -- consumer capability,
- -- general communication skills, and
- -- successful employment.

- **Priority:** *Community Services*

  1. Identify needs of the local service area;

  2. Assess adequacy of offerings through student perceptions of the courses and activities;

  3. Analyze the extent of community involvement through measures such as the degree of:

     - -- growth or decrease in total participation,
     - -- growth or decrease in offerings,
     - -- race/ethnicity participation, and
     - -- senior citizen participation.

APPENDIX D

CONTENT OF ACCREDITING STANDARDS AND STATEWIDE PRIORITIES

Accreditation Standards	Statewide Priorities
Goals and Objectives (including access)	Access
Educational Programs	Transfer Education
	Vocational Education
	Liberal Arts and General Education
	Remedial and Basic Skills Education
	Noncredit and Continuing Education
Institutional Staff	
Student Services	Student Services
Community Services	Community Services
Learning Resources	
Physical Resources	
Financial Resources	
Governance and Administration	Student Assessment
	Program Evaluation
District or System Relationships	

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